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Knowledge diffusion: Farmer Field Schools as an agric. extension technique

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The study Investigated diffusion of knowledge from the Farmer Field Schools (FFS) programme conducted during the period of 1994-2002, by the Department of Agriculture in the Southern Province of Sri Lanka. As one of the principal ides of the FFS as an agric extension instrument is to diffused technical information from participating farmers to others, the objective of the study was to evaluate the knowledge diffusion process from FFS-participants to others.

The study included seven sites in Southern Province; *Yatiyana, Dayandara* and *Beralapanathara* in *Matara* district and *Ambalantota, Meegasara, Walasmulla* and *Beliatta* in *Hambantota* district. After selecting a *yaya* where a FFS had successfully been conducted, randomly chose 10 farmers from FFS-participants as well as 10 non-participants/ neighbour farmers. Next, a different nearby (control) *yaya* was identified and randomly selected 10 farmers for the study. Thus, each location comprised with 30 farmers and the entire sample was 210 farmers. The information was gathered using a questionnaire in *yala* 2003 season.

Among the FFS graduates, 86% reported that they reduced the insecticide use due to the knowledge gained through FFS. However, only 11% of other farmers cited that they received such information from FFS graduates. The popular types of information received from FFS-farmers to others were; soil management practices, insect control practices, and land preparation practices, respectively. Reference to the information received, 30% of neighbours received information about straw incorporation while 14% received information about use of single nutrient fertilizers. Thirty percent of this neighbour farmers have received information about straw incorporation from FFS-participants. Further, many of them (27%) acted on this information.

The study indicated that the most popular type of information subjected to be transferred were the practices done by FFS-participants in their fields, which could observe by other farmers, such as straw incorporation. The study also reveled that relatively few other farmers, changed their insect control practices based on the information received from FFS graduates. This is, because insect control practices of FFS-participants were less observable to others.